This is me trying

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by alcottsangel

Summary

Charlie hits rock bottom.
He thinks he's going to die.
The poets walk in on him self harming.

Notes

TW! This is really graphic especially concerning the sh. Please consider wether or not you are currently mentally stable enough to read this.

This is part of a series, which isn't required to be read. This can be understood nonetheless. It's advised though.

See the end of the work for more notes

"You look sick." Todd says one afternoon during their study session. Charlie's wondering why he ever encouraged the shy boy to speak up when they were all together. Everyone is looking his way at that, but he keeps staring at the paper before him while the latin words are starting to blur into a black mess.

"Very charming, Anderson." He laughs it off, but their gazes linger and he begins to get uncomfortable. "He's right though." Meeks observes and leans forward to properly inspect Charlies pale face.

Of course Todd was right. He felt sick, really sick. He wasn't actually, but after two hours of Knox rambling about the date he had planned for Chris he might as well be. "Geez, can't a man feel bad in peace?" He dared to look up and met Knox's worrying eyes and hated how his mind tricked him, if only for a second, into thinking it was love instead.

"Do you need someone to take you to the nurse?" Meeks pressed further, but Charlie shook his head. "It's nothing I can't handle, just a headache." He laughs and they join in. How easy it is to lie to them, Charlie notes. How easy it is to hide his arms under long sleeves and his breath under mints and lots of toothpaste and his thoughts behind poor jokes. How little they must know him, if they haven't figured it out.

But Neil gives him a knowing glance. Neil always gives him a knowing glance. 'You're like that because of Knox, you're gay. You're a pathological liar. It's written all over you.' His eyes seem to scream and Charlie nervously begins to chew his pencil. Neil put up with all the shitty things he did. All the lies, all the snarky comments. Neil knew Charlie, he could read it when he wasn't telling the truth. Charlie was afraid of that. Suddenly he feels a pit in his stomach and it's so much worse then. He just wants to throw up.

He awkwardly shifts, Neils eyes not once leaving him, before he shuffles the papers across him into one big pile and begins to collect his belongings. "You know what, I think I'm gonna go to bed early tonight, I actually really don't feel so peachy." He stands to grab his bag and leave, then he lowers his voice. "I'm real sorry, but I'll have to miss another meeting."

"I don't think you should be alone right now, Char. You look like you're about ready to pass out on us. I'll come with you." That was Knox. Charlie is surprised about it. Some selfish voice cheers in

agonising victory. 'He cares!'
But he knows he doesn't really want him to come along. He wants to be taken care of, yes, but he doesn't want to be seen at rock bottom. It's fine to be sick for one night, but he couldn't allow himself to let his demons get the better of him again tomorrow. He needed to be the fun one of the group, if he couldn't do that what was he even good for?

"Thanks but no thanks, Knoxious. I'd rather go to the nurse than have you watch me, stalker." He'd actually really like that. He pats Knox's back as he leaves. Nobody followes him. Not even Neil, with his awful knowing glance. Perhaps they don't care enough after all.

When Charlie gets to his room he dumps all his stuff under his desk and struggles to get out of his clothes. He's suddenly feeling really hot, sweating alot and the pullover he's wearing feels like a prison he can't escape. When he eventually makes it, he throws on a white tshirt and his school sweatpants, before he reaches deep into his closet to take a sip of the hidden bottle of Jack. It was preserved for meetings of the Dead Poets Society (he told himself), but now it felt like a forbidden medicine to make his head lighter. Everything seemed to serve that purpose these days. Then he falls into the freshly changed sheets of his bed.

His breathing is strangely shallow and he cannot for the life of him take even one breath that is deep enough to leave him satisfied. His blanket is too warm but not having it cover his body feels odd and like something is missing. There's pressure on his ears that makes him wanna throw up. He rolls in his bed for about twenty minutes until the feeling overwhelmes him entirely and he hastily gathers his toiletry bag and the almost full bottle of Jack before speeding out of the room to the shared bathroom.

It's empty, thank god, and Charlie throws his bag on the floor beside him as he falls to his knees in front of one of the toilet and empties all of his stomach contents into it. It reminds him of all the European summer nights he spent locked inside an empty hotel room. It tells him he really should drink the whole bottle. He hears the bathroom door open and manages to shut and lock that of the toilet stall he's in. The person that just came in doesn't say a word. As Charlie still hovers over the toilet seat breathing heavily, the other guy pees in the stall beside his, before walking out and leaving without washing his hands. Charlie thinks he might throw up again.

It takes him a few minutes before he feels well enough to get up and

brush his teeth. By know the bathroom begins to fill with boys getting ready for bed, but he must be a real sight for sore eyes, because not one approaches him the entire time. When Charlie is done he locks himself in a stall again and for a while he just listens. Not one poet comes in, but he weirdly relates to the conversations of the unknown boys and it helps him to stop thinking for a moment. He drinks the entire bottle on his own, despite knowing what a bad idea that was, before stuffing it into the toiletry bag that it barely fit in. The awful thoughts return as the bathroom empties, until only Charlie is left again. By now he must be in here for hours. Nobody came to look for him. Of course they didn't, they were having a meeting in the cave. He could've been there. He chose not to be.

When he's sure that neither some guy nor a teacher will interrupt he takes out the old matchbox he kept in his toiletry bag, before pulling down the grey sweatpants. He lingers on the toilet seat for a bit longer to look at the mess that was already there. He couldn't get his eyes to focus and his mind was spinning. Then he added new sins to his body. The lines weren't straight and the razor blade slipped once, leaving a superficial cut on his thumb that he sucked the blood from. He feels funny and he feels experimental und he cuts on his wrist twice, not long but deep. When he was done he accidentally dropped the blade and while he leaned forward to pick it up it felt as if he was flying. There were drops of blood on the ground and new ones kept falling.

His head felt so light now. It wasn't this empty once since he had been back at Welton. God, how he missed this. He giggled and brushed his hand through his hair and over his face and he barely felt it. When he remembers that he dropped the blade he attempts to pick it up again and notices that the drops of blood turned into a little puddle.
When he tries to focus his eyes to inspect the cuts he feels ill again. The nice feeling is gone. He still feels as light as a feather, but he's not feeling so empty anymore and instead his mind is racing. He slips down the toilet seat and opens it up, he once again vomits, this time only bile, but it sobers him up and he realises that he messed up. Badly.
The jogging pants that are still hanging around his ankles are now stained red.

He attempts to stand up, but his legs give in and he falls. This never happened before. He knew it bled more when he was drunk, but this definitely never happened before.

In an attempt to stop the bleeding he wraps toilet paper around it. He knows he should use a wet cloth, but he's afraid to leave the toilet

stall because he knows for a fact he couldn't actually walk over to the sink and would have to crawl.
By now Charlie is crying violently, he opens his toiletry bag to see if there's anything that could be useful, only to realise that he left the bag with bandages in his room. He rubs toothpaste onto his tongue, a misguided attempt to ease the taste and the smell of bile and alcohol, then he begins to wipe off the blood on the floor.

Oh god, Charlie was going to die. He was going to die all alone, on the floor of Helltons bathroom. He was going to die without reading his best poems to his friends, without hearing what advice Keating would give them in their last period together, without seeing Todd and Neil escape with each other, without ever going to a bar or a concert, without hugging his mom or his sister another time, without telling Knox that he was in love with him. Charlie was going to die and he was going to be all alone while it happened.

He watched as the blood sipped through the toilet paper and he questioned wether or not he's overreacting. If he was actually going to die or just like, lose alot of blood and pass out and wake up again and be fine. Or maybe not even that. Charlie manages to focus enough to figure that the cuts wouldn't be a problem if he would be sober and had his bandages. Than he starts contemplating what would have the better outcome: scream for help or not.

Before he can make a decision, the bathroom door opens again. There are several voices that speak in hushed tones, before he can hear Pitts. "Charlie? Are you in here?" The only answer he can muster up is a muffled sob. Then someone knocks on the door of his toilet stall. "Charlie? Did you throw up?" Knox asks softly. He can see five pairs of shoes under the wall of his stall. He hopes Cameron is the one that's missing. "Yeah." He doesn't recognise his own voice. It's hoarse and it seems to be miles away. "I don't feel well."

They're not stupid, they can hear that Charlies crying. They can hear that he's drunk too.
"Are you drunk?" Meeks speaks up. Charlie can't place wether he sounds disapproving or worried. "Yeah." He repeats the answer. "Did you throw up because of that?" He's not sure about that. The first time he only had a sip, the second time he was wasted, sure, but it was the blood that really triggered it. "Kinda. No. I don't know." He tries to breathe, but the air is too thick. "Can you open a window? Shit, can you-" He sobs again. He's so fucking embarrassed. Crying in front of his friends, what was he, five? "Can you wet me a towel and pass it under here?" He waves his right hand, the one where he didn't cut, to

tell them where to put the towel.

They don't answer, but he hears them shuffling. The window is opened, the water is running. Todds pale hand passes the towel to Charlie. A muffled thanks escapes his lips before he unwraps the toilet paper and presses the wet cloth on the cuts without daring to look at them.
"Shit, is that blood?" That's definitely Neil.
Charlie doesn't know what to answer to that.
"Come on Char, open up. Let us help you. It's okay to be sick, it's okay to need help. Or even if you're not sick, if you're just drunk or something, we can help you too." Neil kneels beside the stall and his voice is barely above a whisper.

It takes Charlie alot of strength to be able to answer, and it hurts to speak. "Yeah, uh, it's the latter. But I vomited most of it out so, uh, I'm not that drunk anymore." He thinks for a moment as he looks down at the smeared blood on the ground. "And, uh, I hit my nose on the toilet seat. It's bleeding, but it's fine. I can handle it, I'm used to it. Don't worry."

He can hear them gasp and whisper at the statement. He can imagine how they exchanged looks. Then there's a long silence before Neil answers. His voice sounds pained. "I know you are used to it. Doesn't mean you shouldn't take help when it's available." Charlie can't help but laugh. When he lifts the towel he finally dares to glance at the cuts. Most of them have stopped bleeding.
"Hey, remember the night when you were drunk after the soccer match? You allowed Neil and I to help back then too, so why not now?" Knox sounds like a sitcom dad giving a pep talk to his kid. It's ridiculous.

For a moment he thinks about just telling them everything then and there. That's everything he ever wanted, right? For someone, for them, to know. To care.
He wouldn't do it, of course. He couldn't. Todd needed to come out of his shell and stop hating everything he was, Neil needed to escape his father and he needed to practice his acting for that, Meeks and Pitts needed to make something real big of themselves and for that they needed each other. Hell, even Cameron couldn't use Charlie having a mental breakdown. And Knox. God, Knox needed to find someone who understood und loved and cared for him and he needed to find that with Chris.
They didn't need Charlie to unload all his problems on them. It's not like they could fix it, even if they knew.

"That night was different." He tries to strangle his sobs with the wet, bloody towel. "This is worse. I can handle it. Just go to bed."
He can't handle it. He needs help, he knows that. The poets were the best he was gonna get. Nolan or some other teacher would force him to come out, expose and expell him, call his parents.
"Actually, could someone go to my room and pick up bandages? They're on the far left in my nightstand."

He can hear to bathroom door open, Pitts promises to return quickly. When the door is closed again it's silent. Charlie puts the bloody toilet paper into the bowl and flushes again. He's too embarrassed to speak up. His head is still light as a feather and he thinks he might pass out. At least he can't seem to keep his eyes open.

"What do you need bandages for?" Something in Todds mind seems to click. A realisation. Charlie feels busted. He opens his mouth like a fish, but he finds no answer. "You said your nose was bleeding, but fine. You don't put bandages on a nosebleed, you can't. What do you need the bandages for, Charlie?"
"Stop." His voice his weak, but demanding. There's some kind of mutual understanding between them. Todd stops indeed. It's silent again.

"How much did you drink?" Meeks says much more cheery than Charlie would've expected. Maybe he tried to make the situation less awkward. Charlie took the chance, mostly because engaging in conversations kept him awake and he was dangerously on edge.
"A bottle of Jack. I just wanted to take a sip to help with the headache, but it didn't stop, so uh, you know. Comme ci, comme ca." His crying stopped, either because he was too focused on answering or because he was too focused on staying awake. "It was for the last meeting before christmas break. I wanted it to be a surprise. I get you another." Some of the boys laugh and it makes him feel better about the situation. As if he can get away without a proper explanation after all.

"Maybe you should just stay sober for awhile." Neil comments calmly.
"You don't know your limits." Charlie giggles like a child. He's so lightheaded. "Oh, I do know my limits. I've tried enough of everything there is to try to know them. I just choose to ignore them."
Neil doesn't seem to find him funny at all. "Is that what you are up to during summer? When you were not returning any of our calls? Getting drunk?" "Yeah." The Dalton boy answers bluntly, irritated. Neil remains neutral.
"We're worried about you, Char."

Pitts stumbles back into the room before Neil gets to finish. "Got what you wanted." He says proudly and throws the bag his friend asked for over the wall of the bathroom stall. Charlie fails to catch it, but it's not heavy and it lands perfectly in his lap. He opens the bag and is relieved to see everything he needed. He begins to patch up his leg. It's not as clean as it would usually be, but he knows what he's doing and he knows that it'll serve the purpose. It'll do.

Bandaging his leg takes all the focus Charlie can muster up. He can't process the whispers outside of the door, until they directly adress him again.
"Why did you do it?" Knox asks. "Do what?" Charlie comes up with the counter question.
"Getting drunk. Now and during summer. I mean, I guess alcohol is cool. But not every day. Not when you're all alone. We noticed, you know. We're not blind." He stops talking as if he expects someone else to continue. Meeks does. "We called you alot last summer. And the summer before that. You gave us the number of the ski resort, we thought you wanted us to call, but you never picked up. Your dad did though."

Charlie inhales sharply, he starts to panic. He didn't want that, the poets interacting with his dad. It was dangerous. It meant trouble.
"He said you were probably off getting drunk again. He said it's the only thing you did. And you get blackout drunk at every party you go to. And during meetings you keep nursing the same pocket bottle of vodka."

"I know."

"Well why do you do it?" Pitts pressed, but what was he supposed to answer to that? He knew why he did it, it made things bearable. But he couldn't tell them that, because he couldn't explain what the things that the alcohol made easier were.

"I don't know." He fails to put the bandage around his leg. It frustrates him and he rips it off again. His hands are shaking. He needed help. God, he needed help.
"I'm not an alcoholic or something. Seriously. I can stop. And you all are exaggerating this. It's not like I get drunk every day, not even every week or month. Only when the opportunity is there. And what else am I supposed to do during summer?"

They can't counter half the things he said, because they're true. His alcohol consume isn't excessive. Just reckless.

"Crazy idea, but you could go skiing, you know? It's what people usually do in a ski resort." Pitts jokes and they all laugh about it. He could take this as a way out. He's too exhausted to jump on the opportunity.

"I don't really wanna run into my parents." He mumbles. "I don't like going home. I don't like staying in Welton either, when I spend the holidays with my family I can at least escape them to do stupid shit my father can blame on me being a teenager."

"You don't like your parents?" Knox asks. He sounds surprised. He knew Charlie's parents for years, but he never figured they didn't get along. Charlie was their golden boy after all. "I mean, who does? Everyone has some issues with their parents. My mom's fine. I love her, I really do. But I never get her without my dad being there too. And he's pretty shit. Like a military captain." He laughed, because he didn't know how to confess something without playing it down with a joke, even when they weren't funny.

"I like going home for christmas though, because my sister is there." He chews on his cheek. Half sister, his parents would correct him. His father was married before, but they liked to ignore that. Divorce wasn't exactly a thing in picture perfect suburban families. "I think she's the only person that really knows me and doesn't hate me for it. And she makes the most amazing cookies. And she buys me records my parents deem to be inappropriate."

Charlie's rambling now. He hates that so much about himself. The moment someone is listening to him he can't stop talking anymore. It's humiliating. But they're listening, they're not interrupting him and he likes talking about his sister because he loves her. His head is spinning too fast to be embarrassed about that tonight anyways.

"Summer used to be so much worse, but since I can avoid my father it's gotten easier."

There's a soft knock on his door. He recognises Neil's shoes under it. Times over. They won't allow him to escape them any longer. "Open the door, Char. Please." Neil's voice is so soft that he could barely hear it. There was the silent understanding again. Neil knew pain. Neil related to Charlie. It's why they were best friends in the first place.

"I can't." He mutters and the tears are falling again. On the other side of the door glances are exchanged. This was bad. This was Charlie at

rock bottom. This was Charlie, their Charlie, who could always crack a joke and cheer them up and give the best relationship advices, breaking apart. It broke the poets too.

"Did you hurt yourself?" Came Neil's moment of brightness. Meeks and Pitts look at each other. Todd whips his head, that is looking out of the window, around to stare at Neil in blatant shock. Knox stumbles back to the door. Charlie was doing bad, but he wasn't doing that bad. Neil was being ridiculous.

But Charlie's only answer is a heartbreaking sob. Blood, bandages, secrets. It all makes sense now. Knox wished it didn't. Knox wished it would stay hidden forever. Knox wished his Charlie would've never done something like that to begin with.

"It's not like that." Charlie starts. "I mean, I don't know. I guess it is, but I'm fine. It's not—I'm not fucked up or anything. You don't have to worry about me."
The final confession. He couldn't take it back now. They knew.
He was marked forever, ruined. Rotten. This was the most embarrassing moment of his life. It felt as if someone had stripped him naked during one of Nolans horrible speeches.

"I didn't think of you as fucked up anyways, Char. Everyone has moments where their feelings are too big for their heart. Sometimes we take it out on our bodies instead. It's fine."
Neil is still leaning against the door, waiting.
"It's out, Charlie. There is nothing you need to be ashamed of. I won't judge you, you know? I've seen it all. Just let me help. Please. I know you can take care of yourself, I know you did more times than you should, but let me help. Let us help. We're here already, we're not gonna leave you." The door of the stall is unlocked. Neil turned to his friends in silent victory.
"It's bad." Charlie warns them. "I don't want to scare you." He says.

"You won't." Neil promises. "I'm opening the door now." He alerts Charlie, before he carefully pushes the door open.
His friend his sitting on the ground and not looking up. There's blood everywhere. The ground, the towel, the toilet. A bandage is unrolled and laying next to him. The gray sweatpants Charlie is wearing are pulled down to his ankles and stained red too. He was terribly pale and his hair was a mess. He shields his leg with his arms, but there are two cuts on his wrist that he can't hide.

The loudest poet is silent. He feels like an animal in the zoo. Knox is

so shocked at the sight that he almost throws up himself, instead leaving the bathroom. Charlie's sure he scared him off for good now.

(Knox leans against the door. He can't breathe. This was bad. Really, really bad. This was his Charlie sitting in his own blood. His Charlie with cuts that he did to himself because he was doing so horribly. And all he did was ramble about Chris to make Charlie painfully aware that Knox was into girls.
Knox was into girls. With a name that starts with the letter C. With the quickest wit he had ever seen in a person. With the most observing eyes and the funniest jokes. With the best advices. With the best heart.
Knox was into girls. Not Charlie.
Definitely not Charlie.)

Neil breathes in once, before he claps into his hands announcing his plan.
"Alright, we got bandages and all we need in that bag. Pitts, help me sit him up on the toilet seat. Meeks, Todd, get me some more wet towels. Preferably some you won't miss."
Pitts steps forward and they both grab Charlie under one arm to lift him up. It reveals the whole mess left on his right thigh. The cuts and the scars. Some long and thin, others thicker. Some looked out of place and had the size of a cigarette butt.

Knox returned the exact moment Charlie's scars were on full display. He closes the door in a rush and they lock their eyes. Charlie doesn't recognise any disgust in them. Only guilt.

Once Charlie is sitting the way Neil intends he begins to clean up the cuts. The others are gathered around them clueless on how to help. The situation felt unreal, like a fever dream. Macabre.

He is much too tired to be embarrassed. Of the cuts, of his body. His weakness. He closes his eyes. Todd warns him to stay awake, he promises them that he will.

His mind is drifting. He imagines himself eating his sister's christmas cookies. He imagines himself during that one summer where him and Neil stayed two weeks with the Overstreet family. He imagines himself playing his saxophone. He imagines himself during one of their meetings.
All the happy moments play over and over in his head.

Someone is taking care of him.
Someone is patching up his wounds with bandages and nice words. It's

not his own hand pretending to be somebody else.
It's his friends picking up the pieces that were to heavy for him.

Gratitude. Just for one more night.
Charlie would explain tomorrow.

End Notes

This is one of the most personal things I ever wrote.
It's by far my favourite part yet.
Please, please, please let me know your thoughts in the comments.

Also, let me know if you want it to end here or if you would like more to come. I'm not 100% sure where to go from here, so ideas and wishes are welcomed.

Please note that english isn't my native language, so I probably made a ton of mistakes.
Take care of yourself!!

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!